

Testimony
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Kindergarten is a bridge year between unstructured play and early learning experiences to the more structured learning environment of formal schooling. At a time when approximately 60% of American's children attend full-day kindergarten- many of Michigan's children attend schools where it is simply not available. Sometimes it is available if parents pay extra. Often it is available full days, but not every day of the school week.

We know that kindergarten is of immediate educational benefit to the students. We also know that it builds a firm foundation for long range gains, intellectual as well as social and emotional. Full day kindergarten is an effective strategy for closing achievement gaps. I've included a chart of research backing up the five following essential points:

1. Full Day Kindergarten Boosts Student Achievement.

A. Longitudinal data demonstrates that children in full-day kindergarten classes show greater reading and mathematic achievement gains than those in half-day classes.

B. Full-day Kindergarten can produce long-term educational gains, especially for low-income and minority students.

2. Full- Day Kindergarten Improves Students' Social and Emotional Skills. They have more time to focus and reflect on activities and to transition between activities.

3. Full-Day Kindergarten is a Sound Educational Investment,

4. Teachers Prefer Quality Full-Day Kindergarten,

A. They know their students better.

B. They can better develop activities and lessons to meet student needs.

5. Full-Day Kindergarten is Optimal for Parents. There is less shuffling between home, school and child care and more time for focused independent learning.

Since full- day Kindergarten is so beneficial, attendance should be mandatory. Often children who begin their school years with sporadic attendance, settle into a pattern which is difficult in future years to improve. Furthermore, since we are teaching curriculum and thinking in greater depth, it is critical that students attend school.

One essential factor missing in discussions about full-day kindergarten is the need for regulations requiring children starting kindergarten to have reached age five at the beginning of the kindergarten program. Michigan currently allows children to enter kindergarten if they are five by December first. There should also be a mechanism that allows for exceptions on a case-by-

case basis, where the final determination should be made by the school district after appropriate consultation with the parents and the kindergarten teacher.

Four year old children should have access to pre-kindergarten programs which are high quality, universal and publicly funded. What better place for this to happen than in our public schools? Children who have not attended preschool often lack the social and foundational skills critical to having a successful school experience.

Leaders in times past have faced challenges just as you representatives do today. The first Governor to institute an Income tax on Michigan citizens was Governor Romney. The first governor to ask for an increase in that Income Tax was Governor Milliken. They saw that in order to make a good future for all of our citizens, we must invest. Now is the time to invest in Michigan's future. Now is the time to invest in Michigan's children. Now is the time to invest in full day mandatory kindergarten, with high quality pre- kindergarten education available to all four year olds.

1. Full-Day Kindergarten Boosts Student Achievement

Longitudinal data demonstrates that children in full-day classes show greater reading and mathematics achievement gains than those in half-day classes.

Walston, Jill and West, Jerry. *Full-Day and Half-Day Kindergarten in the United States: Findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/web/2004078.asp>.

Ackerman, Debora J., Barnett, W. Steven, and Robin, Kenneth B. *Making the Most of Kindergarten: Present Trends and Future Issues in the Provision of Full-day Programs*. National Institute for Early Education Research, March, 2005. <http://nieer.org/docs/?DocID=118>.

Full-day kindergarten can produce long-term educational gains, especially for low-income and minority students.

Plucker, Jonathan A, Eaton, Jessica J., Rapp, Kelly E., et. al. *The Effects of Full Day Versus Half Day Kindergarten: Review and Analysis of National and Indiana Data*. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, January 2004. www.doe.state.in.us/primetime/pdf/fulldayreport.pdf.

Cryan, John R., Sheehan, Robert, Wiechel, Jane, and Bandy-Hedden, Irene G. "Success outcomes of full-day kindergarten: More positive behavior and increased achievement in the years after." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 1992, v. 7, no. 2, 187-203.

Education Commission of the States. *Full-Day Kindergarten Programs Improve Chances of Academic Success*. The Progress of Education Reform 2004, ECS, v. 5, no. 4, September 2004.

Montgomery County Public Schools. *Early Success: Closing the Opportunity Gap for Our Youngest Learners*. Montgomery County (Maryland) Public Schools, July 2004, www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/superintendent/docs/early_success.pdf

Viadero, Debra. "Study: Full Day Kindergarten Boosts Academic Performance." *Education Week*, April 17, 2002, v. 21, no. 31, p. 14.

2. Full-Day Kindergarten Improves Students' Social and Emotional Skills

A full day of learning offers social, emotional and intellectual benefits to kindergartners. They have more time to focus on activities, to reflect on activities and to transition between activities.

Ackerman, Debora J., Barnett, W. Steven, and Robin, Kenneth B. *Making the Most of Kindergarten: Present Trends and Future Issues in the Provision of Full-day Programs*. National Institute for Early Education Research, March, 2005. <http://nieer.org/docs/?DocID=118>.

Cryan, John R., Sheehan, Robert, Wiechel, Jane, and Bandy-Hedden, Irene G. "Success outcomes of full-day kindergarten: More positive behavior and increased achievement in the years after." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 1992, v. 7, no. 2, 187-203.

3. Full-Day Kindergarten Is a Sound Educational Investment

Recent research has demonstrated that funds invested in quality early education programs produce powerful returns on investment.

Heckman, James J. and Masterov, Dimitriy V. *The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children*. Working Paper 5, Invest in Kids Working Group, Committee for Economic Development, October 2004. <http://jenni.uchicago.edu/Invest/>.

Lynch, Robert. *Exceptional Returns: Economic, Fiscal and Social Benefits of Investment in Early Childhood Education*. Economic Policy Institute, 2005. www.epinet.org/content.cfm/books_exceptional_returns.

Full-day kindergarten provides a bridge between prekindergarten programs and the early elementary years.

Education Commission of the States. *Full-Day Kindergarten: A Study of State Policies in the United States*. ECS, June 2005. fcd-us.org/PDFs/ECS_FDK.pdf.

Full-day kindergarten enables teachers to assess students' needs and abilities more effectively, leading to early intervention.

Plucker, Jonathan A, Eaton, Jessica J., Rapp, Kelly E., et. al. *The Effects of Full Day Versus Half Day Kindergarten: Review and Analysis of National and Indiana Data*. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, January 2004. www.doe.state.in.us/primetime/pdf/fulldayreport.pdf.

4. Teachers Prefer Full-Day Kindergarten

Teachers get to know students better; they are able to develop a richer understanding of students' needs and, in turn, to develop activities and lessons to meet those needs.

Elicker, J. and Mathur, S. "What do they do all day? Comprehensive evaluation of a full-day kindergarten." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, v.12, no. 4, pp. 459-480, 1997.

5. Full-Day Kindergarten Is Optimal for Parents

Comparison studies demonstrate that parents prefer full-day kindergarten.

Early Education for All. "Investing in Full-Day Kindergarten Is Essential." Citing West, Jerry, Denton, Kristin, and Germino-Hausken, Elvira. *America's Kindergartners*. National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000.

Education Commission of the States. *Full-Day Kindergarten: A Study of State Policies in the United States*. ECS, June 2005. fcd-us.org/PDFs/ECS_FDK.pdf.